

'Umar Ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz, the Fifth Caliph

HEROS OF ISLAM SERIES

Brief Biography of Great Caliph of Islam

Notes:

In this article:

- S.A.W.W. means صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم
- SWT means سبحانه و تعالى
- Wherever we have used Allah SWT “says” it is about the Ayah from Quran in Arabic as present in Quran. None of the translations can convey the meaning of Allah’s word in complete sense

'Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, the Fifth Rightly Guided Khaleefah

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Ameer Al-Mu'mineen 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab Al-Farooq (ra) was walking in the streets of Al-Madeenah with the grandfather of Zaid bin Aslam as he used to do so as to see to the affairs of the Muslims. However, Allah SWT planned that on this occasion an event would occur that would have consequences that could not be foreseen at that time.

Whilst 'Umar was leaning on a wall he overheard a conversation between a mother and her daughter. The daughter had collected milk for that day to be sold but the milk was less than expected so her mother told her to mix water with the milk to increase it. The daughter objected and told her how the Khaleefah 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab had forbidden mixing of milk with water to be sold in the markets. The mother responded by telling her that 'Umar was not present and that nobody would know, but her daughter objected and reminded her that although Umar was not present Allah was watching. She said: **"I cannot obey Allah in public and disobey Him in private."**

When 'Umar heard this he told the grandfather of Zaid bin Aslam to find out about this person and when he found out that she was not married he decided to marry her to one of his sons. He approached them and mentioned her merits and his son 'Aasim who had not yet married stepped forward to marry her. 'Aasim and his new wife later had a daughter who married the son of Khaleefah Marwan who was called 'Abdul-Aziz and from them came 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Aziz (Raheemuhullah).

'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Aziz was born in the year 63 Hijrah. His father 'Abdul-Aziz was the appointed Wali of Egypt and when 'Umar was young he sent him to Al-Madinah to be raised in an Islamic environment. So he went, memorised the Qur'aan at a young age and was educated by the foremost scholars from the Islamic Ummah and from the great generation that followed the Sahaabah (rah). When his father passed away the Umayyad Khaleefah Abdul-Maalik called him to Damascus and he was married to the Khaleefah's daughter Faatimah bint Abdil Maalik.

In the year 86 Hijrah he was appointed by Al-Waleed the son of Abdul-Malik as the Wali of Al-Madinah and he ruled until the year 93 Hijrah. He was known for his justice and Zaid bin Aslam said in regards to him:

"I have not prayed behind an Imaam after the Messenger of Allah S.A.W.W who resembles his salaah more than this young boy (al-Bayhaqi)."

It is said that 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Aziz was removed because of his justice and fairness which exposed the other Wulaa like Al-Hajjaj Bin Yousuf who was ruthless and ruled with an iron fist. This was the type of ruling that characterised the rule of Khaleefah Al-Waleed whom the historians described as an oppressor and tyrant despite his many achievements in regards to the spreading of Islaam and conquests. In particular those in Andulus under the leadership of Taariq Bin Ziyaad and Sind under the leadership of Muhammad Bin Qaasim.

After Al-Waleed his brother Suleymaan became Khaleefah but after only three years he became fatally ill. It was at this time under the advice of his Wazeer, that he decided to nominate from outside the family chain and instead choose his cousin 'Umar Ibn Abdul-Aziz on the condition that after him it would return to his family chain. He kept his nomination secret and first made the influentials from his family agree to his decision and then upon his death it was announced that 'Umar would be the next Khaleefah.

This decision was a surprise to Banu Ummayah and unexpected but it allowed 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Aziz to ascend to the post of Khaleefah and become the Ameer Al-Mu'mineen. 'Umar Ibn Al Khattaab used to speak of a dream where he saw one of his progeny becoming a leader that would fill the earth with justice and that he would have a scar on his face. (At-Tirmidhi) Now in the year 99 Hijrah his great grandson who had been struck by his riding animal in

the forehead as a child had become Khaleefah. Indeed there is no disagreement that 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Aziz filled the earth with justice during the time of his Khilaafah.

The great Scholar Sufyan Ath-Thawri said that the Khulafaa numbered five: **Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmaan, 'Ali and 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz.** This is a title that none have shared, to be placed side by side with the Khulafaa Ar-Raashidoon and the greatest of the Sahaabah (rah). There have been many Khulafaa and many achieved great acts and have become well known by the Muslims such as Haroon Ar-Rasheed, Al-Mu'tasim Billah and Muhammad Al-Faatih amongst others. However, none have been given such a great title as 'Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz. Imaam Ahmad said he was the Mujaddad of the century who came to revive the Deen and he is the only one throughout the course of Islaamic history to whom this title has been universally accepted.

'Umar was shaken by his appointment and although he had acted justly in his life, before this he was accustomed to an extremely lavish lifestyle as lived by the Ummayah household. However his appointment had a radical affect upon him and the weight that he now felt upon his shoulders made him change into something that would be spoken about for over a thousand years.

Upon his appointment the Khaleefah's carriage was brought for him and he refused saying that his mule was sufficient for him. Al-Laith narrated: "**When he became Khaleefah he**

started with himself and family and then the people of his household and he took from them their possessions and counted their wealth as Mazhaalim (acts of injustices that needed to be restored). He moved out of the palace and built a small house with two rooms. He freed his slaves and returned any wealth and property that he had attained due to privileges to the Bait Al-Maal. He approached his wife Faatimah who had jewellery that was given to her by her father which no one had seen the like of and he said to her: 'Either you return this to the Bait ul Maal or you permit me to separate from you because I cannot stand for you and me to be in the same house (whilst you have it).' He also explained to her that they would have no luxuries in their life and that they would live the simplest of lives and he gave her the choice to return back to the palace and continue living in luxury or remain with him with only Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. This daughter of a Khaleefah and sister to two former Khaleefahs responded to his call, returned the jewels and accepted Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, and she remained loyal to this throughout his Khilafah and after his death, may Allah's mercy be upon her."

One day 'Umar approached his wife and asked: "Do you have a Dirham so that I can buy some grapes?" She said no and said: "You are the Ameer Al-Mu'mineen and you are not even able to find a dirham to buy some grapes?" He replied: "This is less for us to bear than the chains that will

be around us in Jahannum tomorrow." Faatimah said: "I do not know of a single time that he made Ghusl from the state of Janaabah from the time that he became Khalifah."

'Umar understood the words of the Messenger of Allah S.A.W.W. when he said:

"No one who is placed in leadership over 10 or more, then does not act justly between them, except that on the Day of Judgement he will be brought in shackles and chains." (Al-Haakim)

A Tailor once visited 'Umar and brought to him a Thawb worth 8 dirham and Umar said: **"It is nice but it is too luxurious for me."** So the man said: **"I came to you when you were in Al-Madinah (as Wali) with a Thawb which was 5000 dirham and you said to me: "It is nice although it is a bit too rough!"**

Abu Yousuf in his 'Kitaab Al-Kharaaj' wrote that Faatimah the wife of 'Umar said:

"I never saw a servant of Allah who feared Him more than 'Umar. He devoted his body and his soul to the people. All day he would sit tending to their affairs, and when night came he would sit up while business remained. One evening when he had finished everything, he called for his lamp - from which he used to buy the oil from his own money - and prayed two prostrations. Then he sat back on his folded legs, with his chin in his hands, and the tears

ran down from his cheeks, and this didn't stop until dawn, when he rose for a day of fasting.

I said to him, 'Ameerul Mu'mineen, was there some matter that troubled you this night?' And he said, 'Yes, I saw how I was occupied while governing the affairs of the community, all its black sheep and its white sheep, and I remembered the stranger, beggar and straying, and the poor and the needy, and the prisoners in captivity, and all like them in the far places of the earth, and I realised that Allah, the Most High would ask me about all of them, and Muhammad S.A.W.W. would testify about them, and I feared that I should find no excuse when I was with Allah, and no defense with Muhammad.'

And even when 'Umar was with me in bed, where a man usually finds some pleasure with his wife, if he remembered some affair of Allah's (people), he would be upset as a bird that had fallen into the water. Then his weeping would rise until I would throw off the blankets in kindness to him. 'By Allah' he would say, 'How I wish that there was between me and this office the distance of the East from the West!'"

Ataa said: "Umar used to meet with the Fuqahaa each night and they would remind themselves of the death and the Day of Judgment and then they would all cry as if they had been attending a Janaazah."

Qais Bin Jubair stated: **"The like of 'Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz amongst his family was like the believer who was in the court of Fir'aun."**

The Umayyads had turned the Khilafah into a family business, they lived like kings and princes in luxury and extravagance and they would use the wealth of the Ummah to satisfy their greedy desires. When 'Umar became Khaleefah he invited them to a banquet and kept them waiting for hours until they complained of hunger. He asked them to wait and that it would be worth it however after further hours they complained again and said that they would eat anything that he had that was ready. So he brought to them the simplest food that was eaten by the common people and they all ate until they were full. He asked them: **"Are you satisfied?"** And they responded affirmatively so he said to them: **"If you are satisfied with something so simple then why do you live such greedy and extravagant lives."** After this they said: **"This is our fault when we allowed the blood of 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab to enter in to our lines."**

Willingly or unwillingly the Umayyads were obliged by 'Umar to return the wealth that they had taken without right and he worked vigorously to correct all of the injustices that had been allowed to dominate before that.

'Umar went through the state's affairs and looked in to all the areas where the Sharee'ah rules were being manipulated or abused. Some of the matters that he changed included:

- Instead of relying on taxes, he requested all the governors to encourage the citizens to practice agriculture.
- He dictated that if anybody had a piece of land which he/she did not cultivate for three years, the land was to be taken and given to somebody else who would cultivate it.
- State officials were excluded from entering into any business.
- Unpaid labour was made illegal.
- Pasture lands and game reserves (which had been previously reserved for families of high ranks) were evenly distributed among the poor for the purpose of cultivation.
- He urged all officials to listen to the complaints of their citizens. In addition, he used to announce that if any subject had seen an officer mistreating the people, the officer should be reported to the leader and that subject would be given a reward ranging from 100 - 300 dirhams.
- He wrote to his prison guards not to handcuff any jailed person for it prevented him from performing Prayer. He also wrote to them: **"If your power over people were to lead you to treat the prisoners unjustly, then remember the Power of Allah over you."**
- He prohibited any insults upon 'Ali (ra) and his family which had become widespread within the weekly Khutbah and instead he inserted the recitation of the Aayah:

"Verily, Allah enjoins Al-Adl and Al-Ihsân and giving (help) to kith and kin and forbids Al-Fahshâ' and Al-Munkar and Al-Baghy (i.e. All kinds of oppression), He admonishes you, that you may take heed." [An-Nahl, 16:90]

Until today this Aayah is recited in nearly every Khutbah that is given every week in all four corners of the world.

A lot of the revenue that Banu Ummayyah would take from the subjects was from the Jizyah and they abused this system by continuing to take it from those who accepted Islaam and they also made little effort to spread the Islamic culture amongst the non-Muslim subjects or encourage them to become Muslim. 'Umar changed this and made efforts to spread the Islamic culture amongst the populace with the result that most of Egypt and Persia embraced Islam. His family complained that this would lead to a fall in revenues. However, by applying the correct Sharee'ah rules related to the economy which encouraged trade and agriculture the Islamic state began to flourish. He also enforced the collection of Zakaah and its correct distribution according to the Sharee'ah rules so that the true justice of Islaam was felt by the entire Ummah.

In regards to this prosperity Ibn Kathir recorded that due to the measures undertaken by 'Umar, the annual revenue from Persia alone increased from 28 million dirhams to 124 million dirhams.

'Umar was also strongly opposed to the idea of ruling ruthlessly by the sword as his predecessors had done.

Jarrah Ibn Abdullah, Governor of Khorasan, once wrote to the Umayyad Caliph Umar ibn Abdulaziz stating that the people of Khorasan were wild and rebellious, and nothing but the whip and the sword could control them. Umar replied: **"Your theory that nothing but the whip and the sword could control your people is absolute nonsense. Truth and justice can control them; spread truth and justice in your reign"**.

Through this justice and not the sword 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Aziz was able to bring the rebellious factions within the state under control through this approach and the lands of Islaam experienced a period of stability and peace that they had not experienced for decades.

'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Aziz was Khaleefah for only two years and four or five months. 'Umar was eventually poisoned by a servant who had been bribed by someone from within the House of Ummayah. In his final moments he was overheard saying: **"(Marhaban) Welcome to these faces which are neither of man or Jinn."**

He then recited the verse:

"That is the home of the Hereafter (i.e. Paradise), that we shall assign for those who do not seek high status in the earth and corruption. And the good end is for the Muttaqoon." [Al-Qasas, 28:83]

Moments later he left the life of this Dunyaa and began his journey of returning to Allah 'Azza Wa Jalla. Raheemuhullah Wa Rahmatullahi 'Alaihi.

What should we learn and take from the life of 'Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz

There is no doubt that 'Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz was of the most pious of Allah's servants but it was not his piety in his acts of 'Ibaadah that led him to adopting the title of the Fifth Rightly Guided Khaleefah, a title that no other ruler had been given after the first thirty years of Islaam.

What made 'Umar unique was his adherence to the Qur'aan and the Sunnah in his ruling, just as the first four Khulafaa Ar-Raashidoon had been distinguished before him. From his very first speech he declared that the Qur'aan and the Sunnah would be the basis of his ruling and that obedience was only based on this. It was 'Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz himself who said the famous statement: **"Taqwaa is not by praying all night and fasting all day but rather it is abiding by the commands of Allah and staying away from His prohibitions."**

'Umar Ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz Raheemuhullah excelled because of his dedication to implementing the Sharee'ah rules in its complete form with the utmost precision. He restored all of the rights to the people that the Sharee'ah had obligated and he took away from those who had taken that which they had no right to. This is what led to justice filling the earth as the

people once again lived under the shade of the system that Ar-Rahmaan had provided for them and the system that the Nabi S.A.W.W. implemented and the four Khulafaa after him.

For nearly 100 years since the destruction of the Khilafah the Ummah of Muhammad S.A.W.W. has not witnessed any semblance of the rule by what Allah SWT has revealed and it has been over 1300 years since the last of the rightly guided Khulafaa. Our Ummah has been divided and we have rulers that do not believe that the Islamic Sharee'ah should be the basis of ruling and prefer to implement systems that the western imperialists have devised for them. Even recently after the Arab Spring some have celebrated the election of moderate Islamists into ruling positions. However, they continue to subject the Ummah to rules and systems that have nothing to do with Islaam. As a consequence, the Ummah continues to suffer and will continue to suffer the oppression and corruption of these man-made systems.

'Umar Ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz understood the true meaning of being a politician. He understood that politics meant taking care of the affairs of the subjects. This responsibility is what made him cry for hours on end and restrict himself to the simplest life that was filled with remembrance of Allah, death and the hereafter. He went to these great personal lengths so that he would be able to undertake the heavy burdens that his responsibilities demanded and he didn't want Shaytaan to find anyway in to tempt him. This signifies

an approach that all those who have taken on the great responsibilities of Islaam should seek the sacrifices, dedication and preparation to maintain sincerity to Allah ﷻ and His Deen. In the case of 'Umar it allowed him to take care of the affairs of the subjects by the Kitaab and the Sunnah as he made the Islamic belief the sole source of his ruling and the basis upon which the Islamic state functioned. He understood that ruling with justice can only be achieved by ruling by Islaam and sticking to the rule of Islaam in every circumstance and reality.

Muslims who have been oppressed by corrupt leaders for decades find themselves searching for a just and honest leader. In Egypt many are putting their hopes in Muhammad Mursi who is reported to be a Haafizh of the Qur'aan and has origins within an Islamic movement. Some are placing their hopes in the new rulers in Tunisia and I have heard that some have been attracted by the former Pakistan Cricket player Imran Khan as an alternative to the corruption of the PPP and Muslim League(s). However, it is not faces alone that need to be changed in our lands. Rather it is the basis of the systems of ruling that exist in our lands. Until these are changed then the Ummah will not experience the justice of Islaam.

Allah ﷻ says:

"And whoever seeks a Deen other than Islaam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be from the losers." (Al-Imraan, 3:85)

And He ﷻ says:

"Do they then seek the judgement of (the days of) Ignorance? And who is better in judgement than Allah for a people who have firm faith." (Al-Maa'idah, 5:50)

Allah ﷻ warns from diverting from even a single part of what he has revealed in the ruling:

"And so rule between them by what Allah has revealed and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they turn you away from some of what Allah has revealed to you." (Al-Maa'idah, 5:49)

And the S.A.W.W. said:

"Whoever brings anything that is not from this affair (Islaam) then it is rejected." (Muslim)

As such it is obligatory upon this Ummah and those who are working to revive this Ummah to make the Islaamic Aqeedah the basis of their work, solutions and call. It is not enough to change the faces and heads of departments in our lands with people who are believed to be honest. Rather justice can only be attained by the implementation of the rules that guarantee it. Just as it is not acceptable to say that we should give time and a chance to those who have chosen not to implement the Islamic system.

The system that Allah ﷻ has given us to implement His Deen is the Khilafah system and the Islamic texts have not allowed any other form of governance.

The Messenger of Allah S.A.W.W. said:

"Bani Israa'eel had their affairs looked after by the Prophets. Every time a Prophet passed away another would succeed him. But there will be no Prophets after me and instead there will be Khulafaa' and they will number many. The Sahaabah asked: What do you command us in regards to them? He S.A.W.W. replied: Give them the Bai'ah (pledge of allegiance) one after the other and give them their rights for verily Allah will ask them about what he entrusted them with." (Al-Bukhaari and Muslim)

And 'Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz (Rahmatullahi 'Alaihi) was not the last of the Khulafaa who were rightly guided as Allah SWT has promised that the Khilafah will return when He SWT said:

"Allah has promised those among you who believe, and do righteous good deeds, that he will certainly grant them succession to (the present rulers) in the earth, as he granted it to those before them, and that He will grant them the authority to practise their Deen, that He has chosen for them (i.e. Islaam). And He will surely give them in exchange a safe security after their fear, they will worship me and not associate anything (in worship) with Me. but whoever

disbelieved after this, they are the Fâsiqûn (rebellious, disobedient to Allah)." (An-Nur, 24:55)

The Messenger of Allah S.A.W.W. gave us glad tidings of the return of the Khilafah when he stated in the Hadeeth:

"There will be Prophethood for as long as Allah wills it to be, then He will remove it when He wills, then there will be Khilafah on the Prophetic method and it will be for as long as Allah wills, then He will remove it when He wills, then there will be biting Kingship for as long as Allah Wills, then He will remove it when He wills, then there will be oppressive kingship for as long as Allah wills, then he will remove it when He wills, and then there will be Khilafah upon the Prophetic method and then he remained silent." (Ahmad)

The call for Khilafah and the call to return to the implementation of the Shar'iah is stronger now than at any time since its destruction in 1924. The stages that have been described in this noble Hadeeth have come to pass and we as an Ummah are now by His SWT permission going through the final stage of this Prophecy as we find ourselves in the transition stage between the oppressive form of ruling and the ruling which is upon the path of the Prophet S.A.W.W. This will be the ruling that emulates the ruling of the Nabi S.A.W.W. by making the Islamic belief the basis for all laws, rules and actions. The ruling that the four Khulafaa (rah) followed after him and the just rule that was

established by 'Umar Ibn Abdul Azeez, May Allah reward him and admit him with those whom he followed.